1: Dube E-5 (1951-52) 1955 AW17 Telugu AW17



referred to as 'the Kapu' or agricultural castes. As this name suggests, they derive the major part of their subsistence by tilling the land, although individuals from any of these groups may engage in trade and commerce or may take up urban occupations.

In the second group we can place the following: the Brahmin priests, the Komti (traders), the Kummari (potters) and the Golla (shepherds). The five sections of the Panch Bramha group of artisan castes, that is, the Wadla (carpenters), the Kammari (blacksmiths), the Ausula (goldsmiths), the Kase (workers in bell-metal) and the Kanchari (sculptors), also belong to this group —although they claim separate identity and are rather exclusive. The Sale (weavers), the Gaondha (toddy-tappers), the Sakali (washermen) and the Mangali (barbers) also follow their traditional occupations; and although in the hierarchy of caste organization their place is a little inferior to the castes mentioned above, they belong to the second group for the purpose of our classification. The position of the once-tribal but now largely assimilated Vaddar (stone-breakers) and the Erkala (hunters and basket-makers) is slightly different, for although they are not untouchables their position among the clean castes is the lowest.

There are only two untouchable or depressed castes in Shamirpet, the Mala and the Madiga. Of these two, the Malas consider themselves superior to the Madigas, by whose touch they are polluted. However, it should be pointed out that the Indian constitution has abolished untouchability. The untouchable castes can draw water from the public wells and can without discrimination share the public utilities with the clean castes. Their children now freely attend the common village school. But social conservatism dies hard and legislation alone cannot overnight change the deep-rooted complexes of thought and behaviour which are the heritage of many generations of a caste-ridden social system. Caste still retains its endogamous character, and traditional rules prevail in matters dealing with persons of lower castes. Thus in these two spheres at least the untouchable castes have still to confine themselves to their narrow circles. While in the cities the clean castes are no longer sensitive to the touch of a person belonging to these castes, in the countryside an untouchable still cannot approach too close to clean-caste people lest they be polluted by a chance physical contact. Some progressive-minded untouchables

Chelmsford Reforms in 1919, the Local Self-Government became a provincial subject. The Madras Village Panchayat Act was passed in 1920, with functions of 1. construction and maintenance of roads, villages and bridges, buildings; 2. lighting of streets; 3. construction of drains; 4. cleaning of streets, removing of prickly pear, construction of latrines, construction, maintenance and repair of burning and burial grounds; 5. sinking wells and making bathing ghats; 6. control of cattle stands, and thrashing floors; 7. Control of rest houses; 8. extension of village sites; 9 enforcement of vaccination; 10. registration of births and deaths; 11. maintenance of latrines; 12. construction of pounds; and 13. maintenance of other public utility services, delegated powers from Local Boards such as control over markets and cart-stands, control of fisheries, establishment and maintenance of village schools, provision of medical relief, etc. 642 623

As the legislation of 1920 was only an enabling one, and not a compulsory measure, village Panchayats could not make much headway. By the end of 1924-25, their number was only 579, But, later on they were able to make progress, because of the appointment of a Registrar-General of Panchayats. Mr. N. Gopalswami Iyengar was the first Registrar-General, and he was rightly regarded as the father of the modern Panchayat Movement in Madras. The development of Panchayats during this period had to depend mostly on the efforts of honorary organisers as there was no regular subordinate supervisory staff under the Ragistrar-General. This Act fixed the age limit of a voter at 25 and prescribed 7 to 15 members to a Panchayat. It did not provide for any reservation of seats to minorities or for ex-officio membership of the village officials. Even on the testimony of their administration reports there were no regular meetings in several Panchayats. Most of them had not even establishments of their own. Often, the President of the Panchayat used to do all the clerical work. But all the same the period from 1920 to 1930 was considered to be the Golden Age of Panchayats in Madras. The number of Panchayats increased from 579 in 1924-25 to 4,479 in 1931-32. 641

There were certain inherent defects in the Madras Village Panchayats Act of 1920 which hindered their progress. Functions like the removal of noxious plants from village sites, performance of sanitary work, distribution of water, the maintenance of watch [illegible], sanitation and conservancy, repairs of drinking water services and provision of educational facilities, control over village [illegible] were entrusted to them (Sec. 12). But their 642 623 652

be created, 3. Panchayats should be created compulsorily in all villages in 5 years, 4 Village Officers should be precluded from Panchayats, though the headman might function as a temporary President for short periods in the absence of the President, 5. adult franchise for all men and women of 21 years of age and the system of ward division and voting by ballot should be introduced in all Panchayats, 6. only Panchayats with a normal income of Rs. 5000 and more should have whole-time paid executive officers, 7. the levy of house tax and vehicle tax should be made compulsory, but the proposed additional land cess of 3 pies should be optional, and 8. there should be no nominated Panchayats. [623] [642] [624] [641] [651]

The only effect of this bill was an amendment that was introduced to the Madras Local Boards Act of 1920, by Act XIX of 1943, by which, whole-time executive officers had been appointed to all major Panchayats, and such of the minor Boards as had been notified by Government in this behalf. In April 1946, the Madras Village Panchayats Act of 1946 was published along the lines of the bill of 1941, with some modifications.

The power of Collector in the matter of supervision and control of Panchayats in the District was retained, though he was to function, subject to the control of the Registrar-General, who was to be the provincial supervising authority in the place of the Board of Revenue, originally provided in the Bill of 1941. The ex-officio membership of the Village Headman and his eligibility to exercise the presidential functions in the absence of the President or Vice-President through the Karanam as Honorary executive authority of the minor Panchayats, assigned in the Bill of 1941 was dropped out. The clauses for the Amendment Act of 1943 providing for the appointment of whole-time executive officers for notified Panchayats, had been incorporated in the new Act also. The provision made in the Bill of 1941 for nomination of members had been retained, though it was to be resorted to only in special circumstances, such as fraction or disorder in the village. [623]

But this Act was kept in abeyance while the Congress Ministry were thinking of introducing a thoroughly new Act.

At the time of the survey in 1947, the Panchayats were being governed by the Madras Local Boards Act of 1930. There had been no elections since 1939. Only the old Panchayats were continuing in power.

# PART II

## Actual Conditions Revealed by the Survey :

**A. Structure :** Selection of the sample of the Forest Panchayats was made on the same basis as that of the Village Panchayats in four categories i.e. good, moderate unsatisfactorily and very unsatisfactorily working according to the connotation explained in the preface. (Table No. 22)

The Forest Panchayats were not constituted on one village one Panchayat basis, but they were constituted for a group of villages. Sometimes the Forest Panchayat was for 7 to 8 village hamlets e. g. Bayyavaram in Vizagapatam District, so with almost all the Forest Panchayats in every district.

The membership varied with the number of hamlets to be represented on the Panchayat. If number of hamlets was less and the area of the Forest Panchayat was meagre, naturally, the number of members of the Forest Panchayat was less.

The caste composition was usually cosmopolitan, i. e. 4 were Valamas, 4 were Kapus and one was Raju in Bayyavaram which was typical example. The other Forest Panchayats in other districts revealed a representation of all castes.

The method of election was always by show of hands. The electorate consisted of the cattle owners.

There was no ex-officio membership of the Village Officials.

The ability of the Forest Panchayat and its working depended mostly on the team work of the members and their sense of responsibility, not to speak of the resources at their disposal.

**B. Finance :** Generally the income of the Forest Panchayats was constituted of the proceeds of the grazing fee, the sale of dead wood, fuel and quarry's stone, income from minor forest produce, bark, leaves, Tangedu, Avaram, etc. Income from sandalwood trees was generally taken by the Forest Department of the Government. Similarly income from big fuel coups was also taken away by the Government except an insufficient share given to the Forest Panchayats for meeting the cost of cutting the wood. (Table No. 23).

The grazing permits of the Forest Panchayats were usually determined according to the extent of the acreage under command of the Panchayat. The incidence per cow came usually to 3 acres. But the rate of the grazing permits varied from one Panchayat to another Forest